



Carnival has come to town!

Aruba's Carnival has started with a bang, and we do mean that literally! As is tradition, this past Saturday, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year, November, at exactly 11:00 AM, Tecla Kelly, the president of SAC, the *Stichting Arubaanse Carnaval* banged down her gavel and declared Aruba's 53rd Carnival officially begun.

This year the event took place at the Betico Croes Sport Hall in Santa Cruz, and was accompanied by a weekend of festivities and an exposition by SAC and groups that will be participating in the Carnival in 2007. It allowed the public to be a part of this very special moment, and gave them the opportunity to look over the costume designs of the various groups, talk to the organizers, and sign up to participate or compete in the queen contests.

The actual carnival events will begin on January 6 with the "Fakka loop toch," or "Torch Parade." This is a nighttime event that will signal the start of a blizzard of competitions, "jump-ups" and parades that will eventually culminate in the Grand Parade through Oranjestad on the Sunday before the beginning of Lent.

For now, the organizers of the various groups will be working in the background until the end of the holiday season. This past weekend many signed up as they examined the breathtaking designs of the Sunrise Group, which promises to "fly high in the sky like a butterfly" to the music of Tsunami, in costumes and road pieces designed by John Fingal. A new group, Majestic, will sparkle like diamonds, rubies, emeralds and sapphires as they march down the streets to the music of the Search Band, the same band that played at the weekend's "happening" on Saturday night. For those that will not be taking part but want to display their Carnival spirit, EMCO offered at table full of various shirt designs, both printed and embroidered to suit anyone's fashion sense. A remarkable collection of carnival memorabilia, which is available in the warehouse store in Dakota, was also on display.

Last year's carnival queen, Michelle Vingal, also participated by modeling some of the fantastic makeup designs of Erik's Hair Studio, and many were able to do the same at with face painting in carnival style.

This past weekend Arubans got a "taste" of the Carnival to come, something that will dominate their lives once the holiday season passes, and for the island, is the biggest event of the year. If one is planning a return to Aruba, try to make it for Carnival, as it is the experience of a lifetime!